

Rough DRAFT Minutes of the 1st Operations Working Group Meeting

July 12, 2001 Durham, UK

Please send additions/comments/corrections to rschommer@noao.edu,
& kroth@gemini.edu

Minutes prepared by Kathy Roth, kroth@gemini.edu

Edited and slightly amplified by rschommer

Attendees:

Bob Schommer (Chair) (US)

Taft Armandroff (US)

Guillermo Bosch (AR)

Luis Campusano (CH)

Warrick Couch (AU)

Dennis Crabtree (CA)

Bob Joseph (UH) (GSC chair)

Magnus Patterson (UK)

Phil Puxley (phone link from Hilo)

Harvey Richer (CA)

Pat Roche (UK)

Kathy Roth (GO)

Jean-Rene Roy (GO)

Doug Simons (GO)

Thaisa Storchi Bergmann (BR)

Charles Woodward (US) (GSC member)

I. Actions and Recommendations of the 1st OWG Meeting

July 12, 2001

Action Items:

- 1.1 The ITAC report should be distributed to the contact person from each NPO (in addition to the ITAC members themselves).
- 1.2 Phil Puxley should distribute the Phase I proposal checking tool to the NPOs.
- 1.3 All NTACs should create a single ranking list for all proposals (combining both queue and classical programs for both Gemini North and South).
- 1.4 We request that the Gemini Science Archive (GSA) team create an object catalog from the prototype archive to be used for at least flagging duplicate observations. The implementation of this information will be determined by Gemini and the GSA team. Given the demands on Gemini staff, we

do not consider this the highest priority because of the small number of existing science observations.

- 1.5 The NPOs request that Gemini provide access to the internal release of the updated PIT and OT, before release to the community.
- 1.6 Phil Puxley will update the schedule pages on the web to include the number of hours awarded in queue mode for 2001B.
- 1.7 Bob Schommer will explore the possibility that the US support Phoenix operations in queue mode for all the partners.
- 1.8 A Project Scientist telecon is scheduled for Monday August 27, 10am HST, to review final details of the call for proposals. The draft call will be circulated on August 24 by IGO.
- 1.9 Phil Puxley will investigate the distribution to the National Offices of the observer feedback forms for each partner, including both queue and classical observers.
- 1.10 Phil Puxley will provide a copy of the telescope usage statistics report prepared for the board to the National Offices. (DONE)

1.11 The next Operations Working Group meeting will be held in La Serena on Wednesday January 16, 2002.

Draft Recommendations:

1.1 The Operations Working group reiterates the top level

recommendation of the GSC:

"The GSC strongly urges the Gemini Observatory to concentrate its resources in commissioning the telescopes and the facility instruments, improving system reliability and implementing the high-level software systems. This will ensure that the maximum scientific returns to the Gemini communities are returned in the near future.

The Operations Working Group discussion of the instrument complement for semester 2002A followed in the spirit of this GSC emphasis. We endorse the strawman proposal put forward by Gemini observatory with the following recommendations to be verified in the telecon August 24.

- Gemini North: The facility instruments will be NIRI and GMOS, and visitor instruments Hokupa'a/QUIRC and CIRPASS. QUIRC and CIRPASS will be scheduled in non-overlapping blocks to comply with the recommendation of only one visitor instrument. NIRI and GMOS will be available for both queue and classical observing, with a cap of 14 classical nights total.

No polarimetry or coronagraphy will be available for NIRI. GMOS will be in imaging, MOS and IFU modes. Hokupa'a/QUIRC & CIRPASS are in classical mode (mini-service ok). No Quick Response, no target of opportunity, no remote observing for any programs. Minimum queue observations will be 1hr and minimum classical allocations of 1 night, as standard.

The maximum percentage of time offered for science use of Gemini N should be 66% (121 nights). The total number of nights for NIRI + GMOS is at least 80 nights, with the scientific merits of proposal driving the balance between all the instruments. A result of this may be that one or both of the visitor instruments will not meet their minimum night allocations and will be removed from the schedule entirely. DemoScience with CIRPASS has a lower priority than either the telescope engineering, instrument commissioning, or ITAC approved science programs.

- Gemini South: The facility instruments will be TReCS in queue only, imaging only mode, after 1 May, and the Acquisition Camera in queue only mode. Flamingos I will be available as a visitor instrument after 1 June (mini-service ok). Flamingos modes are imaging, long slit, and, after 1 July, MOS mode. Phoenix will be available as a visitor instrument for the first 4 months, classical mode only (the US is exploring a mini-service mode for the partnership). The Acquisition Camera is available as a Quick Response mode.

The total amount of time available for science use should be no more than 50% (90 nights). DemoScience for Phoenix is of lower priority than engineering or ITAC approved science programs. TReCS and Flamingos compete for the same calendar slots, so we wish science priorities to drive the detailed instrument balance.

We believe there is a need for reassessments of the status of T-ReCS both at the August 27 telecon, prior to the call for proposals, and prior to the ITAC meeting in December before committing and awarding observing time.

1.2 The Ops Working groups recommends that the GSC examine the commissioning schedule

for instruments from 2002A-2004B. We suggest that the balance of instruments between the two sites needs to be addressed, given the particularly heavy demands on Gemini South due to instrument arrivals during this period.

II. Introduction

The 1st Operations Working Group Meeting was held in the Sir James

Knott Library, Physics Department at the University of Durham, Durham
UK, on July 12, 2001. The meeting was chaired by Bob Schommer and all
partner countries were represented.

1. Approval of and changes to the agenda:

- JRR: We need to clarify where this committee fits with respect to
the GSC.

PR: Would like discussion of the PIT (part of 2001B discussion).

PR: suggests discussion of how observer feedback is recirculated
back to the National Project Offices, and would like a report
generated as to how the previous semester's observing time
was used. Put after the 2002A report.

Corrections or changes to the minutes

page 3. Resolution 8.7, paragraph 2, last line "have to be" instead
of "have be"

page 15. Phoenix commissioning and system verification (OF resolution 8.5)
should have been referred to as commissioning and DemoScience
since officially systems verifications are only done for facility instruments.

page 17. Dennis Crabtree noted that the makeup of the working group is different from what was described in the minutes, comment? eg more than 9 people. Suggest deleting the phrase in parenthesis "(at most nine people)"

There followed a discussion about NIRI system verification (f/6 camera imaging done only thus far). May need to be readdressed after the fix and the other modes still need to be exercised. SV data will be released to the community on the 2 month early release basis, ever for the 2.5 visitor queue programs which were executed.

Review of Action Items

8.1 Not yet on the web, extracted from as far back as 1997, still need to checked for proprietary or confidential information.

8.2 Done by TG and PP

8.3 Done, status was there was no pipeline for mask making and so MOS not offered in 2001B

8.4 Done, first two arrive in Chile shortly, 7 participants total.

Response for the call good, overfilled in fact. Tololo is

helping with housing and computer facilities. Flamingoes 3 NPO staff will assist and for OSCIR 4 in total. Two additional staff from Argentina had to be turned down due to housing/office space restrictions.

8.5 Done, extended to three instruments rather than just Flamingos.

8.6 Done. Policy already in place and approved by the Board.

8.7 Done and we are here.

8.8 Done and has been held.

Structure of and Charges to this Committee:

This group, the Operations Working Group (OWG) includes the Gemini Associate Directors and reports to Matt Mountain as the Gemini director. The OWG is a new incarnation of the old Instrument and Operations Forums. The OWG needs to meet each six months and make recommendations which go to the director. Those reports should also go to the GSC chair but there is so much overlap with the GSC

membership there is no need to formally consult with the GSC prior to submitting the recommendations to Matt. Officially is a working group of the GSC. Perhaps the Operations Working Group should in the future meet in the month prior to the GSC meetings so they can report back to the GSC. Meeting time also has to be coordinated with the scheduled release of the call for proposals.

Semester 2001B Operations Status:

a) Gemini Observatory Perspective (Phil Puxley)

Discussion of the ITAC report, the OWG would like to continue seeing this even though the GSC has also requested a more condensed version. Some NTAC members did not receive copies even though copies were distributed to all ITAC members, perhaps copies should also be given to the NPO contact person.

Review of the 2001B proposal process, one of the biggest problem was the way time was requested for joint proposals. Both the time requested from the specific NTAC and the total from all NTACS needs to be reported. Also people who loaded the old version of PIT had

some problems with the epoch. Need all proposals translated into English before they are forwarded to Gemini. ITAC would have preferred to see the NTAC comments for proposals that are forwarded to Gemini. This is particularly useful when there are comments on the observing strategy for example. Would also be useful to include the technical comments as well. There is some question about confidentiality when distributing ITAC comments via e-mail.

- Request each NTAC to embed these comments in the proposals themselves but there is some doubt expressed that this will be possible because of the tight time constraints. Perhaps if they cannot be embedded then they could instead be relayed via the ITAC member.

- Some partners are giving separate ranked lists for queue and classical, would like to see one unique ranking list even though the packaging structure should remain the same.

- Discussion about the Help Desk, would like to reiterate that the NGOs should encourage people to use the Help Desk. This is the primary way that Gemini gets feedback and uses this to update the web pages. The Help Desk learns (builds up a knowledge base) by being used. Also the Help Desk has been changed such that now when there is an answer the person who submitted the question also gets the summary of the

solution via e-mail as well as the answer being posted on the Help Desk.

Some comments were made that people are reluctant to post trivial requests to the help desk to avoid looking silly. Phil reiterates that Gemini is very interested to know if the reason people are using the Help Desk less because they don't need it or if they just don't find it useful.

Would be nice to know what percentage of requests are made in person or via e-mail to the NPOs compared to those made via the Help Desk.

Duplicate Proposals - what are the options that should be pursued since the Gemini Science Archive is not yet available? Suggestion to provide a catalog of completed observations extracted from the headers of data already provided to the GSA that could be included as part of the GSA prototype. This database would then have to be available to the NTACs and the proposers. Problem is that before one should prevent people from re-observing targets the quality of the data needs to be accessed. One other problem is that sometimes duplicate programs have not yet been executed by the time the TAC meets. In the long term you would want a "check duplications" button in the PIT similar to the HST and SIRTF models. The logistics of how to search the catalog from the prototype archive and how to use this information as far as restricting the execution of duplicate observations needs to be addressed by the Observatory and the GSA. Note that the OWG does not want this issue to detract from the current task of making the observatory fully

functional so this is not of a high priority.

Changes to PIT - The major change of associating instrument resources with observations is necessary for greater ease of building the queue schedule. Some discussion about problems associated with updates to PIT and OT requiring newer versions of Solaris than the user may have. Opinion expressed that this is mainly a Solaris JAVA issue, this is also an issue at the Phase II stage. Updates to PIT now should be simplified by requiring module downloads not entire software downloads. Internal release of new version scheduled for last week of July, would like that to be made available to the NPOs. Suggestion that all the NPOs copy what the US has already done providing a web-based front-end that creates an xml file or the backend that produces a LaTeX file. Discussion about the output from PIT being too verbose and spread out on too many pages making the TACs job too painful.

Partner Perspectives on the Semester 2001B proposal process

Bob Schommer (US)

The number of proposals for Gemini has not increased, so the oversubscription

was only slightly greater than a factor of 2, which was disappointing. We believe this was a reaction to NIRA problems (early runs cancelled) and classical time oversubscription during 2001A, and that the US observers are adopting a "wait and see" attitude". The US mini-q was very successful in 2001A, and continued in 2001B (for 3 nights on Hokupaa.) The U.S. has committed manpower for QS on Gemini S and CTIO will host visitors from Brazil, Canada, and Australia. We are concerned about transmitting NTAC commentary due to its confidential nature, as this is not done in US emails, but only via actual letters sent to principle investigators. The US is currently balancing its queue allocation for all conditions, and there has been a concern about gamesmanship in the building of the queue and the balance of conditions.

We recognize that duplicate proposals from previous semesters is a problem but we don't have a way to track what has been observed. We request that the NPOs get some of the information from the investigator observing report forms? We also have no way of being informed of queue targets completed

We found that the time between transmission of schedule to NPOs and posting on the web was too short, as it occurred over a weekend. We request that 2-3 working days be allowed for the NPOs to notify the proposers of the details of their allocation before IGO posts the schedule on the web. Many of the restrictions on RA and instrument availability also made it difficult to submit proposals, particularly for Gemini South.

The changes of instrumentation status also make programs hard to develop

(e.g., OSCIR moving to Gemini S).

Pat Roche (UK) (get report e-mailed)

- Subscription rate was higher, but quality of proposals still not as good as expected so clearly some people are still waiting for Gemini to be more mature before applying for time.
- Recommended people only apply for NIRI in queue mode because there is still some uncertainty as to when NIRI will eventually become available.
- Some PIT discussions, some concern that once the UK joins ESO there may be more reluctance to
- Note that the number of hours awarded in queue mode is not posted on the web pages, which was requested by the GSC.

Guillermo Bosh (AR) (get report e-mailed)

Warrick Couch (AU) (get report e-mailed)

Noted that there was no use of the Gemini Help Desk, only trivial requests received via e-mail. Most people indicated they did not use the Help Desk because they felt the Gemini web pages provided adequate information.

NTAC meeting disappointing because of their lack of education about Gemini and the feedback was quite poor. NTAC members need to be educated about Gemini, this seems to be a general issue among other NTACs as well, particularly when there is no .

Luis Campusano (CH) (get report e-mailed)

This was the first semester in which there was no more access to Gemini North for Chile which caught some people unawares. There was an oversubscription factor below 1 at the first proposal deadline. As a result the deadline was extended and this grew to 2.

Unhappiness with the PIT, will investigate adopting process similar to that used in the US.

Thaisa Storchi Bergmann (BR) (get report e-mailed)

Proposal process went smoothly, increased useage of the Help Desk and

no reported problems with the integration time calculator.

NTAC is worried about the imbalance of awarded observing time during QuickStart, was concerned that because they do not want to be penalized in future semesters as a result of having too much in QuickStart. Jean-Rene reports that after QuickStart all partner shares were zeroed out so that is not a problem.

Dennis Crabtree (CA) (get e-mail comments)

Fewer number of proposals than expected although the process went smoothly. No problems in the submission and Help Desk use was fine. Some tightness on the time schedule on the back end. PIT complaints. Agree with the lack of education about Gemini on the part of the TAC members. Continuing to try to inform people

Jean-Rene Roy (GS) (get e-mail comments)

28 proposals, there was an over-subscription rate of 4, the quality of the proposals was high. Most of the Gemini staff like the PIT. There was not any technical assessment of the proposals made available to the TAC. Felt that some re-submitted proposals had not been changed and did not take in account comments the TAC had made in prior semesters.

Brief discussion as to whether or not publications will be identified as to which proposal they are associated with - that will be tracked.

Semester 2001B Operations Status

- High Level Software (Phil Puxley)

In QuickStart and 2001A everything which had to do with handling the proposals, extracting information, scheduling, execution and tracking observations was done manually. Communications between telescope and visitor instruments exists only minimally via the vii. Data reduction scripts are run manually instead of through a pipeline, and finally the archiving and packaging of the data is still handled manually.

Situation improved in recent months, first testing of automatic observing sequencing with NIRI done in last months, beginning with a proposal and finishing with obtaining a mosaic of NIRI observations.

These were the first nights scheduled solely for the purpose of

software testing. Also executed the first automatic generation of final fits files with complete header status information through the data handling system (DHS).

IRAF script development still proceeding but currently executed manually. Plan to implement an automatic implementation of these tasks in a genuine pipeline by the end of this year. PIT internal release for end of July and OT release planned for October 1. No phase II proposals should be constructed using the old version of the OT. First queue observations scheduled for mid-November. Classical observers should also use the OT, would be good if they could arrive at the Observatory early so that observatory staff can assist in the preparation of the observations.

- Instrument Status (Doug Simons)

For 2001B the GSC has recommended that Gemini North postpone the CIRPASS commissioning and Demonstration Science until early into semester 2002A. A similar recommendation has been made for Phoenix on Gemini South. The GSC also feels that the execution of QuickStart with Flamigos I has higher priority than the Demonstration Science.

Telescope engineering needed to bring the telescopes up to operations should take priority over science at both sites.

Taft gave short report on first MOS useage attempts with Flamingos I at NOAO. They did obtain spectra of science quality but there were some unexpected complications amounting to increased background levels and possible bowing of the masks. This is a preliminary report, the problems did not seem insurmountable. Some discussion as to whether or not the DemoScience is successful does not invalidate the utility of testing this new mode. It was commented that Richard Elston is planning to use part of his payback time in MOS mode, and this precedes the planned DemoScience time frame. Perhaps the GMOS commissioning could be useful for helping with the Flamingos MOS mode - although the timing is bad because they overlap.

Semester 2002A Process Planning (Phil Puxley)

Summary of proposal timeline and instrument capabilities planned for semester 2002A. Some discussion about T-ReCS availability since there are still several important milestones still to complete (eg. science detector readout, image quality, light leaks, flexure tests). No

plans to offer OSCIR in case of T-ReCS slips because that would further delay T-ReCS since they are the same instrument teams. Want to avoid the possible situation where once again awarded observing time is taken away due to instruments not being ready - is it really wise to schedule virtual instruments? Would like a high degree of confidence that T-ReCS will be ready in late August before the announcement is made with T-ReCS available.

Discussion about whether the planned number of nights (30) for visitor instruments on Gemini North (Hokupa'a or CIRPASS) cannot be reduced and given to NIRI or GMOS instead. If for example there are not enough good proposals to fill the minimum number of nights (16, including payback) for either of the visitor instruments would rather drop the undersubscribed instrument and give more time to the facility instruments. Want to insure the TACs have the freedom to award time based on the scientific merit of the proposal and not on the expected time availability for each instrument. Based on the GSC recommendations it is acceptable that the percentage of time for science has increased only a small amount. In the call for proposals it needs to be made clear that if applying for MOS observations one must include sufficient time for mask design imaging although if a classical proposal you will not need to submit a separate queue proposal, Gemini will siphon those off of the proposals. Time will be

charged to the partners. If CIRPASS and Phoenix DemoScience programs are executed in semester 2002A that time will come from the telescope engineering time and will be on top of the time estimates presented.

Taft informs us that if we would like Phoenix for longer than 4 months we can keep it since SOAR is not yet ready. Discussion on how comfortable the OWG is with the proposed 50% science use for Gemini South given the GSC recommendations.

Bob S. has made a suggestion that the US may be able to operate Phoenix entirely in a mini-service queue for all the partners. This would make operations smoother in providing flexibility for engineering and telescope priorities and would relieve pressure on the staff support of many classical observers.

Observer Feedback (Pat Roche)

The National Offices would like to see their observer feedback reports in order to get an idea of the experiences they had. Secondly they would like to see the report Gemini has prepared for the board summarizing the useage statistics.

Plans for Remote Observing (Bob Schommer, Phil Puxley)

It is starting to get to be possible to access both observatories via the internet (Mauna Kea already, La Serena soon). Discussion as to whether or not there will eventually be any plan for remote observing. First step observing from sealevel in Hilo. Second plan to test remote observing from the partner countries via the mini-queue service mode. The engineering teams for coming instruments may find these connections useful for access to additional technical resources remotely.

Also would be good to explore eaves-dropping techniques, all that has been done so far is video internet connections. Still too early to create a working group at this time but should still be aware of the increasing potential.

Statement of Observing Time

It is felt that the amount of observing time available to the community has probably reached a plateau for the next couple of years due to the large amount of time required for commissioning the facility

instruments.

Date of the next OWG meeting - Wednesday January 16, 2002 in La Serena
coupled with the Dedication for GEMini SOuth.